Volume 68 Article 32

1-1-1981

Summer Jobs

Ames Forestry Club

Summer Jobs

The Summer that Almost Never Happened

by Al Wimmer
photos by John Krebs

IMAGINE a "Winter Wonder World" setting in the middle of summer. Sounds inviting doesn't it? That's what greeted me as I drove into the ranger station in Potlatch, Idaho on the Clearwater N.F. However, I knew something was wrong here as I stepped out of my car and onto the carpet of "off-white" snow (???) and a cloud of dust engulfed me. As I watched the people around me walk from place to place, it reminded me of the character "Pigpen" in the Peanuts comic strip. Yes, Mt. Saint Helen had struck and Potlatch was the recipient of over one inch of volcanic ash.

However, I counted my lucky stars and was glad to be there because three weeks earlier, the day I arrived home from school, I received a message saying; "We are sorry, but due to the recent volcanic eruptions, we will not be hiring summer help." This was not a particularly good start to my summer. Anyway, things somehow seemed to work themselves out and I was called back to work as a crew leader of a fire crew for the USFS.

I was greeted by the Fire Management Officer (FMO), John Krebs, and was later briefed on my managerial duties. At first it was hard to picture myself managing a crew. The idea sure had appeal, but it was difficult to grasp because it was one thing to work on a crew and take care of myself, my gear, and my actions, but now I had five other crew members to consider and take responsibility for. The challenge was very exciting and as I reflect back on my summer, it was very rewarding.

The ash deposited by Mt. Saint Helen's eruption proved to be quite an experience in itself. After getting acquainted with my crew, issuing equipment, and settling into our rooms in the bunkhouse for a good night's sleep, I discovered one of the many little surprises that I would have to endure that summer. Do you know what it feels like to crawl in between two sheets of sandpaper and try to sleep? The ash got into everything. It persisted all summer long and clung to the vegetation like cement. The few rains that did occur did not wash it off as you would expect. Instead, it made it cling even more tightly. It did provide brief period of relief from the taste of dust in your mouth and the feel of grit on your teeth. When it did finally dry out, the wind would blow it off and stir it up and restrict visibility considerably, sometimes to less than one half mile. Then it would all settle back into place until the cycle repeated itself.

Working in the timber was also a joy because of the extra protective equipment we were required to wear. We looked like characters right out of "Star Wars" with our black dust masks, goggles, hardhats, sawchaps, etc. strapped on us. It was unbelieveably uncomfortable with it on, especially when the temperature was hot, and it made it difficult to catch your breath. On the other hand, it was even worse without it when we were piling brush and working in the clouds of dust (ash) that resulted from disturbing the ash covered slash.

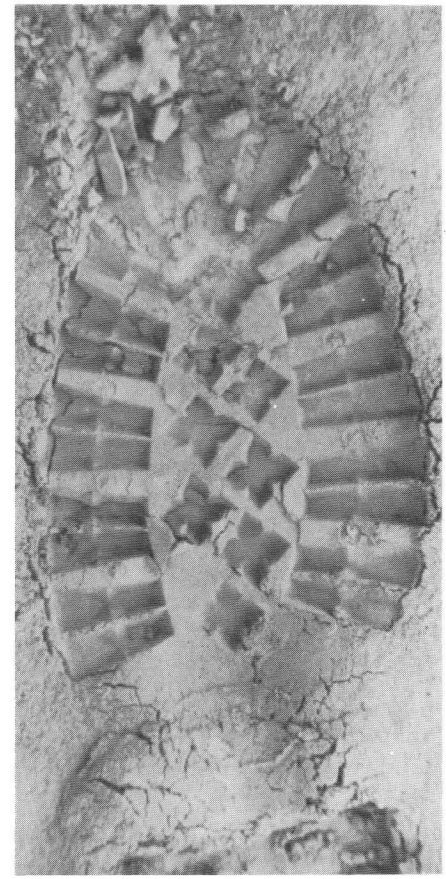
Fires were few and far between this summer. In fact, we were never sent out. I piled brush most of the summer and occasionally recorded the fire weather data and worked in the office dispatching. This served to break up the routine and provided a sometimes much needed break from the field. It was quite an experience and opportunity to observe the various management phases, both in the field and in the office, and participate in the actual planning and paperwork, implementation, and the final completion of work on the site.

One of the biggest challenges I faced this summer was over-coming the anxieties of myself, as well as the crew, to the possibility of getting called out on a fire when bad weather came in. I remember one night in particuar. About 3:00 a.m., a loud crack of thunder shook my walls and I was out of bed and dressed in a minute. I just knew it was a strike (you can just tell) and consequenlty, could not get back to sleep, so I decided to walk down to the office and have a Pepsi. I sat down in the office and listened to the night chatter on the radio. As I sat there listening, I heard the FMO call for the lookout. There was no answer so I keyed the mic and asked if he wanted me to try on the base radio. He asked me why I was down at the office and if there was anything wrong. I explained that I couldn't sleep. All of a sudden I heard a couple of voices laughing on the radio. It turned out that the FMO and my boss, Dick Dudley, and also developed a severe case of insomnia. I was glad I was not the only one with high anxieties.

My job proved to be much easier than I had expected and I attribute this to the fine, hardworking crew I had charge of as well as the friends I had in the office. My crew worked together like a well oiled machine (except, of course, when we had to decide who got to saw and who got to pile brush) and the degree of responsibility of the various jobs we were assigned increased through the summer as we gained the confidence and respect of our peers.

The rest of the staff at Potlatch R.S. must be recognized for their contributions (from the secretaries up to the district ranger) to my first try at a management position. I will never forget all of the friendliness, warmth, help, and support I received from them. It made my work much easier and more relaxed and I believe with all my heart that if you enjoy what you are doing and the people that you work with, you will give 110% of effort back in return. I would gladly put up with all the ash in the world to have the opportunity to work again with the caliber of people that I worked with this past summer.

Well, as all good things come to an end, so did my summer. The challenges had been concurred, confidence had been gained, respect had been earned, and my memories, experiences, and friendships will be with me forever. ■



The Coop and I

by Karen Young

FALL of 1979 rolled around and it was time to think about looking for a summer job. . . . With fate as my guide I attended the Central International Forest Insect and Disease Conference at Devil's Lake, Wisconsin. During this time I was introduced to Dr. David Houston from USDA-Forest Insect and Disease Lab situated in Hamden, Connecticut. Thanks to Dr. Sande McNabb, I managed to sit with Dr. Houston at one of the lunches.

By the time dessert and coffee were served we were discussing the " possibility" of a cooperative education program between ISU and the Forest Service. Many letters later, I found myself driving out to Connecticut for the first of two six month stints. My official job description included: collection of field specimens, establishing and maintaining permanent plots, isolating from field collections, measuring cultural growth, and summarizing and reporting my results.

Little did I know that collection of field specimens and maintianing permanent plots would entail traveling two weeks in Northern New York, two weeks throughout Vermont, and two weeks in mid-northern Maine. It was a great way to see a part of the country I had never been to.

My primary project was a Dutch Elm disease survey throughout Vermont and in Millinocket, Maine. This study was a follow up on a similar survey that was run in 1977. In the late 1960's, researchers in Britain showed that the causal agent of Dutch Elm, *Ceratocystis ulmi* (Buis.) Moreau had two strains, referred to as "aggressive" and "non-aggressive" on the basis of their pathogenicity.

The purpose of the survey was to map the distribution of aggressive and non-aggressive strains of *C. ulmi* in the state of Vermont on the basis of a grid system. The Fall was spent culturing the fungus from twigs with evident streaking. Fungal growth rate and cultural morphology were used to separate the aggressive from the non-aggressive isolates.

I feel I benefited from the cooperative education program. The summer is generally the busy season in most forestry related jobs. Continuing on into the fall gave me an idea of what work is actually like the other 9 months of the year. Upon completion of my coop program, I will have a year's experience with the Forest Service prior to graduation.

For anyone looking for a combined work and education experience, I encourage you to check into the possibility of a cooperative education program. ■

Porcupine Genocide

by Chris Schnepf

MANY people respond with a smile of doubt when I tell them what I did last summer. This reaction is understandable however, since porcupine extermination is not a job often found listed in occupational handbooks.

Last summer I worked on the Paisley Ranger District of the Fremont National Forest in Oregon. The majority of my work involved the elimination of the porcupine from the plantations of that area.

For those who don't know, the porcupine is a slow, primarily nocturnal animal about the size of a raccoon. The reason that it has made so many enemies among the ranks of silviculturists, lies in its seemingly insatiable appetite for the bark of young conifers. Porcupines will take on trees ranging in size from a small seedling, to a good sized sapling, and their feeding usually girdles the tree.

We used two methods to kill porcupines. The first and most effective was night hunting. Porcupines are an incredibly inept animal (they don't really need to be smart or agile, because of their generous supply of defensive quills), therefore, they often take advantage of forest roads for night travel, as an easy way to get around.

The avid porcupine hunter takes advantage of this habit, by driving on these roads at night using two sets of lights. The hunters must keep up a fast (but safe) speed, so that the porcupine will not see them first and head for cover. There are two hunters per vehicle; one drives, while the other "rides shotgun". When a porcupine is sighted, the brakes are applied and the hunter with the gun dashes after the porcupine with flashlight and gun in hand. The slain quarry is then thrown into the back of the truck, for a purpose to be revealed later. A good team can kill upwards of a dozen porcupine in one night using this method, depending on the density of the animals in the area.

The other method of porcupine extermination we used was trap pins. To do this, one cuts four or five 24" logs (each about 2 ft. long) and arrange them in a circle, leaving a space of about 10" between each log. Boards are nailed over the spaces (to prevent deer, cattle, and raptors from stepping into traps), with the traps then being set underneath. The preferred bait for porcupines is dead porcupines (from night hunting). If these are not available, sardines are used. One of the problems with the traps was the occasional catch of non-target animals. I pulled everything from chipmunks to turkey vultures out of the traps and one day I had a confrontation with a badger (he was rather perturbed). This problem was reduced to nearly nothing however, when we started using conibears (body hold) instead of leg hold traps.

All and all I enjoyed my summer job immensely. Plantation protection didn't take up all of my time and I gained experience in a variety of areas including: traversing, timber cutting and TSI boundaries, defoliator and animal damage surveys and a weeks worth of fire fighting training at guard school. Perhaps even more valuable was the experience I gained in the more basic areas of forestry like orienteering, the use of fire maps, mountain driving (both in pickups and three wheeled Atc's) and the use of aerial photos. ■

The Paisley Gang

by Marietjie Burger and Brent Foster

THE summer of '80 was full of new experiences for all the "Paisley Gang from Iowa State. The "Paisley Gang" jobs on the Fremont National Forest varied from porky hunting to timber presale. The people involved in their jobs are as follows:

Chris Schnepf, alias porky hunter, and Kevin Martin had jobs keeping them stationed in Paisley. Kevin's job ranged from fence building crew boss to wildlife inventory during the last part of the summer. Chris' job on the other hand, ranged from the expertise of night porky hunting to odd jobs involved with wildlife timber and silviculture.

The remainder of us, Al Weber (Weeber), Eric Schmidt, Joyce McClure, Brent Foster, and Marietjie Burger, plus 2 locals made up the Timber Presale Crew.

Our first impressions as we approached Paisley (population 290) were: "Are we cruising sage brush and juniper!?" Is this really a town or just a mirage?" But these impressions changed quickly after meeting the people at the Ranger Station, and being told that there were indeed trees on the other side of the mountain, we just had to find them.

Our first week was getting settled into our duty station, Skull Creek Work Center, an hour from Paisley. Skull Creek is an old logging camp in a picturesque setting, a creek flowing through a grassy meadow surrounded by large Ponderosa, Lodgepole Pines and White Fir. The camp included 2 bunkhouses, a bathhouse, a gas house and a large cook house. The first week found us doing a lot of cleaning to make it habitable, making it more fun was finding out there was no electricity and that our well water was undrinkable. After the initial shock, it became known as home, giving us our name for the summer, The Skull Creek Crew.

A day of First Aid Training and a week of Fire School early in the summer helped make the adjustment to our new jobs and the town easier, by meeting the Forest Service people and workers our own age.

Our first sale area, Toot Lodgepole, set the stage for learning how to traverse, cruise, and mark individual trees for presale appraisal. Our presale supervisor spent a lot of time and patience on this first sale answering our questions and teach-

ing us the trade of presale forestry. After learning the basics, much practice, and a little supervision we continued onto other sales.

Our work schedule was four 10 hour days, thus giving us three days of leisure. These were used to explore the sites of Fremont National Forest, the state of Oregon, the coast, Northern California and having fun with our new friends. Our local weekend happenings included volleyball, basketball and softball at the local high school, which may be followed by a visit to the swimming hole, trips to Lakeview (an hour from Paisley) for dancing country western, and a delicious Iowa pig roast.

For the most part we came back with new friends, new ideas, and new knowledge from a fulfilling summer. So if ever in Oregon, stop and visit the Pioneer Pub and Ralph at the Paisley Mercantile and say "hi" from Iowa State. ■

Diversified Forester

by Dave Vales

EVEN with two majors, it is not always easy to land a job which fits the one that is wanted, complete with the glamour of working outdoors. I was stuck at home while working as a seasonal naturalist and fisheries biologist for the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County in Illinois.

Some of the forestry related activities of my job included removal of trees on a soon-to-be reestablished natural prairie, and renovation of a nature trail. However, there were times I chose not to devote my work to forestry and was content to be the ever admired "Forest Ranger" in the public eye. This was accomplished by filling in as interpreter at our nature center, conducting nature hikes, and presenting outdoor career programs to high school classes.

The FWB aspect came when I spent time caring for wounded, sick and young wild animals at the wildlife haven. The biggest project all summer was determining whether the county should spend $150,000 to dredge a lake or not in an effort to improve recreational fishing and control aquatic plant problems. Other fishery work included consulting private pond owners on techniques to improve their fisheries and writing up a complete management proposal for the pond.

The job was not spectacular in terms of the environment to work in, but the learning experience was invaluable. There are many non-forestry related jobs which relate to the outdoors available to those who either cannot obtain a forestry job, or do not want one. Small governmental agencies are a good place to work if you desire a lot of responsibility and yet freedom. ■

My Army Job

by Jody Nelson

I AM in the Outdoor Recreation curriculum with a minor in Resource Management and my work experience of summer 1980 was directly associated with my major. From June 15 to August 30, I was Park Aid for the Army Corps of Engineers at the Clarence Cannon Management Office out of Monroe City, Missouri.

The experiences I gained while I worked as park aid helped me to decide that forestry was definitely my field. Aside from the confidence I gained in myself and my ability to handle any job put to me was the knowledge I gained in dealing with people in various situations.

There were three aids working at Cannon and between the three of us we were responsible for giving campfire programs every Saturday night to the campers, which consisted of either putting together a slide presentation, using a film that the office had ordered or doing some form of play or dialogue. On Sunday mornings we gave nature hikes to the campers on some environmental topic and on Sunday afternoons we worked on the Dam Overlook answering people's questions on the construction of the dam and recreation areas.

When I wasn't racking my brain for ideas for the campfire programs and nature hikes, I was kept busy with other jobs. I helped construct a nature trail, filled brochure boxes, took traffic counter readings, previewed films, cataloged slides, gave programs to the general public, gave tours around the project, helped design a brochure, plus worked in the office answering inquiries, typing reports or whatever needed to be done. I also was required to take a CPR training course.

To sum it all up, I must say that my summer in Missouri was truly rewarding and I only hope I'll find a similar job when I graduate. ■